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SUBJECT: A PROFESSOR OF GENERALS SPEAKS OF THE OBLIGATION
TO ATTACK KURDISH IRAQ

1. (SBU) At a lunch meeting, on October 30, professor Ercan Citlioglu spoke to poloffs of the need to appease the Turkish population-at-large, who increasingly demand that the GOT take military action against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Iraq. Citlioglu, a terrorism expert and president of the Strategic Research Center at Bahcesehir University, claimed that intense domestic pressure on the government, both from the military and from frequent street protests, has pushed the current Justice and Development Party (AKP) government to the point where a decision to launch a significant cross-border operation (CBO) into Iraq is inevitable. Citlioglu claimed domestic pressure is now steering Turkish foreign policy. He said the military, still feeling somewhat threatened by the election of President Gul, dares not appear ineffective against the terrorist threat. And, the current AKP administration simply does not have the political capital to keep the military -- pressed to appear relevant and effective -- from giving the people what they are demanding.

¶2. (SBU) While the professor thought a CBO would be ineffectual with regards to military objectives (destroying or even seriously degrading the PKK's military capabilities) he felt it was unavoidable if the GOT wanted to prevent public outrage from boiling over. "Nothing short of a full-scale incursion would satisfy the people." His fear is that public anger and hatred towards the PKK, which has begun to morph into anger at and hatred of Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Barzani, may further mutate into public anger and hatred towards Kurds in general. One possible consequence, should the government fail to act, could be an increase in anti-Kurdish internal conflict (e.g., bombings of Democratic Society Party (DTP) offices; massive, commerce-choking protests in the streets, etc.). He acknowledged that the benefits of undertaking a significant CBO into Iraq would be largely symbolic. Even so, Citlioglu felt the Turkish public was prepared to withstand casualties resulting from such an operation. "It does not matter if 1,000 soldiers are lost in the offensive. The people will gladly accept this to the handful of soldiers that would continue to die at home should we do nothing."

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT As a former diplomat, and more importantly as a professor currently teaching a security issues seminar for some 25 Turkish general officers, Citlioglu's opinions could hold considerable sway with senior military officials. Citlioglu is savvy and experienced enough to acknowledge that a military effort, geared towards ending PKK violence, must be coupled with both economic and social policies to persuade the local population to withdraw support from the PKK and thus "win" the fight against terrorism in the long-run. But he is convinced that the GOT

has no choice but to accede to the Turkish military's, and Turkish population's, demand for a CBO in the very near term. Although recent reports of a U.S. agreement to provide "real-time intelligence sharing" and other operational support in the fight against PKK terrorism have tempered calls for a large scale CBO, Citlioglu's comments reflect the intensity of the pressure felt by the Turkish military in the run up to the November 3 Iraq Neighbors Meeting and the November 5 POTUS-PM Erdogan meeting. END COMMENT

WIENER